THE MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF SPANISH

1939

REPORT TO THE DIRECTOR

OF LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

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MIDDLEBURY SPANISH SCHOOL

SESSION OF 1939

The Spanish School session of 1939 was in every sense as successful as in past summers. Though there is no need of undertaking any vital change in the present plan of the School, there are a few observations and recommendations that should be set forth.

I. ENROLLMENT

The total number of regular students enrolled in the Spanish School was fifty-seven. I do not want to include either the auditors or the students from other Schools in this number; though they add in every way and are encouraged to come, I consider them negligible from the enrollment point of view. The total of fifty-seven students is three less than the number budgeted but an increase of two students over the total enrollment of 1938. I am not alarmed at having failed by three students to make the budgeted number--in fact, the enrollment would have been over sixty were it not for some last-minute cancellations--but I am concerned over the way the enrollment does not increase substantially when everything in the country would seem to indicate a marked interest in Spanish. There are two causes which, in my opinion, help to explain this standstill in the enrollment:

1. Summer Session in Mexico.

A number of factors--completion of the Pan American Highway, favorable rate of exchange, special Mexican tours (one agency calls for the tourist at his home in a V-8 Ford, provides board and room for nine weeks in Mexico City, includes week-end excursions, and delivers him back to his home for the fee of $240), cheapness of life in Mexico, the glamour of seeing a picturesque foreign country, etc. etc.--have gradually attracted more and more people to Mexico in the past few years. The enrollment of the 1938 summer session of the University of Mexico was close to five hundred, most of them Americans. The majority were from the southwestern states but even so a substantial number were from east of the Mississippi. It is natural to expect that a large number of the enrollment was made up of students of the "tourist" type and consequently neither eligible nor desired by Middlebury but, at the same time, it is safe to assume that at least four or five percent of these students would have attended the Spanish School had they not gone to Mexico.

2. Facilities for Travel in Spanish America.

Almost all the large shipping lines as well as tourist agencies are specializing in tours or cruises to Spanish America. The facilities offered for such travel are constantly increasing. At present, even freighters and cargo liners carry passengers--sometimes for as little as $5.00 a day. To this we must also add the deferred payment plan which is offered by some lines.

One can readily see that such factors will tend, in the course of time to increase the general interest in Spanish; an interest which is bound to be felt favorably in the Spanish School. But our immediate problem is to increase the enrollment steadily, even though it be slow-paced.

I have given considerable thought to the advisability of reducing the fees in the Spanish School. In order to have a direct and immediate bearing upon the enrollment, the reduction would have to be such that it would seriously curtail the total income. I do not, therefore, feel we would be justified in taking any such step--at least, not at the present time.

There are, however, several measures which might be taken to make Middlebury more accessible to that group of students for whom the financial problem is paramount:

1. Increase of Scholarship Fund.

While a reduction in the general fees could not possibly be large enough to be of any real assistance to a student unable to finance his studies at Middlebury, the scholarship awards are of genuine help. Since the establishment of the Scholarship Fund in 1937, the Spanish School has awarded three $50 scholarships yearly. One third of those receiving scholarships return to continue their work at Middlebury. It would, therefore, seem advisable to increase these 3 scholarships to six, to be charged as previously against the general fund.

2. Increase of Student Self-Help.

Up until now, all student self-help, aside from the positions in the dining-room, have been created by the Director and charged to his faculty budget. The expansion of such a policy prevents the creation of student positions without reducing considerably the funds for faculty. As there is room and demand for such opportunities, I suggest that $100 be allotted from the general fund to create additional self-help positions.

It could be suggested that we undertake an intensive advertising campaign. Personally, I feel that nothing further--certainly nothing within the limits of academic dignity--can be done in this respect. Mr. Zaremba has done a magnificent job with publicity by greatly enlarging the mailing list, by advertising in educational journals and by the introduction of a questionnaire which enables us to judge means of reaching potential students. Moreover, the catalog is now received not only by students of Spanish but also by those interested in other languages, thus increasing greatly its circulation.

It seems to me that the only kind of propaganda or advertising we can do, must continue to be done from within. That is, by doing our work better than other schools, by giving our students a training which they cannot find elsewhere, by continuing to do our work better than ever.

II. FACULTY

The Faculty of 1939 was constituted, as in previous years, of well-trained and efficient teachers of Spanish in this country--half of them with former service at Middlebury and well-identified with our methods and aims. The Visiting Professor from Spain, Jorge Guillen, was an extraordinary success. His courses in Spanish literature were very well attended and proved most stimulating to our students.

The appointment of Professor Pattee, member of the Division of Cultural Relations with Spanish America of the Department of State, was most satisfactory. And not only because of the quality of his work but also because it has enabled us to establish new contacts with Spanish America that I hope will prove of great importance in the future of the School.

It is most desirable to enlarge the faculty from year to year but I realize this cannot be done without a decided increase in the enrollment. But regardless of the number of students in the School, I think it would be advisable to introduce several positions as assistants in conversation. One of the characteristics of a small school is the close relationship which can be developed between the faculty and students. In the opinion of everybody, both students and teachers, this happy relationship does exist within our School,and is, in fact, one of it's most distinguishing features. I am aware of the importance given to this part of the life in the School by our students and I want to insist more than ever upon it in the future. To this end, I would like to recommend the creation of two positions, outside the faculty, to be given to well-qualified Spanish-speaking people, not necessarily teachers, to develope conversation and establish close contact with the students. Such positions, which would be compensated by board and room ($125 eqch), could not come from the faculty budget for that would oblige us to reduce the number of courses offered. I would suggest, therefore, that a charge of $250 be made to the general budget to cover this expense.

III. COURSES

The program of courses was carried out exactly as outlined in the 1939 bulletin--divided into the groups of Language, Literature, Methods and Civilization.

The demand for studies of a social nature was filled most satisfactorily in the Spanish School this summer by the introduction of the course "Present Day Political, Economic and Social Development of Spanish America". From the reception given this course, as well as from the growing tendency within this country to draw closer to Spanish America, I am convinced that within our mediums, we should strive to enlarge the field of Spanish American studies.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to M. Morize for including in his program courses (Romance Philology and Methods of Teaching Modern Languages) that may be followed by students of the Spanish School. I feel that with the growth of the Language Schools, both in number and in quality, the sharing of professors and of courses is most desirable and most beneficial to all the Schools.

For several years I have planned to introduce a course in Beginning Spanish but as such an undertaking would have necessitated dropping a course open to our own students, I have refrained from doing so. With the adoption of the plan of contributing to the salary of such a teacher by the other Schools, it will be possible for us to do so. Such a course would be open, naturally, only to students enrolled in other Schools and would in not way interefere with the program of the Spanish School.

IV. LIFE IN THE SCHOOL

The living facilities in Hepburn have been gradually improved during the past few years to such an extent that they are now quite adequate. The refurnishing of the Social Hall, the comfortable chairs in the study rooms, and the purchase of new bed springs add greatly to making the building more attractive and comfortable. Sincere thanks are due to Mrs. Powell and Mr. Zaremba for the attention to these details which so enhance Hepburn.

Mrs. Kingsley has contributed in no small way to making life in Hepburn most pleasant. I want to thank her not only for tending efficiently to our needs but for the spirit of kindliness and friendship she shows all the members of the School.

To my great satisfaction I hear nothing but praise for the varied and attractive food served in our dining-hall.

I think due acknowledgment should also be made to everyone in the administration office. Their task of handling the students at the opening of the session is most admirably done. My sincere thanks for the attentions shown the Spanish School students and for the endless help so cheerfully given to me throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted

J. A. Centeno
Director of the Spanish School.